

GEORGE OLSON HOMESTEAD  
1 mile east of John Blue Canyon Road  
Lovell vicinity  
Big Horn County  
Wyoming

HABS No. WY-163

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Intermountain Support Office - Denver  
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## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### GEORGE OLSON HOMESTEAD

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Location: The site is located at "George's Spring," on an unnamed access road 3 miles east of the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, 1 mile east of John Blue Canyon Road, and about 6.5 miles north of the intersection of John Blue Canyon Road and U.S. Alternate Route 14. The nearest town is Lovell, Wyoming, located approximately 17 miles to the west-southwest. USGS Natural Trap Cave Quadrangle, UTM coordinates 12.725800.4979510.

Significance: This site is associated with early twentieth-century homesteading on Little Mountain in Big Horn County, Wyoming (Criterion A). This site is part of a 628.40-acre Stock Raising Homestead. The site and land parcel were used by George Olson to run about 75 head of cattle during the summer months. This site represents the original location of the homestead improvements made by Olson in order to obtain a patent for the property, which was granted in 1940. After Olson's death, it became part of the Bischoff family holdings and was used for seasonal livestock grazing on Little Mountain.

Description: Building A consists of a one-story, front-gabled log building (10'10" E-W x 11' N-S) that rests on an informal foundation of sill logs and stones. The cabin walls are constructed with full round peeled logs, most of which are chopped at the ends. Rough saddle notching is used to join the logs at the principal building corners. Sapling strips are used to fill the gaps between the logs; red mud-clay chinking was also used, but it has generally weathered away. The gently sloping gable roof is constructed with a large diameter ridgepole with smaller diameter logs laid as rafters. There are no log purlins. It is likely that the roof was once covered with sod that has weathered away. A single entrance is located near the west end of the south wall with a milled lumber frame that is 5' high and 2'4" wide; however, the door is missing. The lintel of the door consists of an elongated notch chopped or sawn out of the log above it. The 2" x 6" door frame on each side extends into the notch. The frame is nailed into the log ends with spikes. A small window bay is located in the west wall, but there is no longer any formal window frame or sash. The interior of the cabin has a dirt floor with several log poles piled against the east wall. A stone fire ring is also located in the center of the dirt floor. The cabin has not been occupied for an extended period of time, and it is surrounded by a thick growth of juniper and limber pine.

History: The site is located on a 628.40-acre parcel of land patented by George W. Olson (Stock Raising Homestead Entry Patent No. 1107991) on April 25, 1940. Olson, a resident of Lovell, Wyoming, first filed on his homestead on April 1, 1929. The land parcel was patented by the "heirs of George W. Olson" on April 25, 1940 after his death. Under the Stock Raising Homestead Act of 1916, homesteaders had to prove residency for at least seven months a year for three years, or five months a year for five years. Olson lived in a tent while he built his cabin during the summer of 1929. He also constructed three miles of mountain road, about one mile of fencing, and improved the spring that still bears his name. From 1929 through 1933, he resided on the premises from April or May to the end of September or October, depending on the weather, and lived in nearby Lovell the remainder of the year. Olson used the land for grazing 75 head of cattle for about six months while he lived on the land. Local informants stated that they had seen traps and snares around Olson's cabin, which he may have used to augment his income and food supply. George Olson died on March 26, 1934.

The Bischoff family retained ownership of the property after his death and used it for livestock grazing. Nephi Daniel (Dan) and Annie S. Bischoff were Mormons who emigrated by wagon from Utah to the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming in 1901. They settled near Lovell and engaged in cattle ranching. Starting with 100 head of cattle, Bischoff proceeded to buy other tracts of land and obtained U.S. Forest Service grazing leases for the Bighorn Mountains. He, his wife, and his five sons also took out homesteads in and around the Bighorn Mountains, and the Bischoff ranches grew into one of the largest cattle operations in the region. After Daniel Bischoff died in a farming accident in 1931, his wife Annie and her sons managed the ranching business. Annie Bischoff was George Olson's sister. After she died in 1950, her sons continued to operate the ranch. George Olson's former homestead was recently obtained by the BLM for the creation of the Craig Thomas Special Management Unit.

Sources:

Big Horn County Clerk

n.d. Big Horn County Clerk, Land Abstracts (microfilm), Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne.

Bureau of Land Management

n.d. General Land Office Records, Land Patents. <http://www.glorerecords.blm.gov>.

Feick, Duane, BLM, Cody Office, Telephonic Communication, 9 March 2009.

Moats, Bruce T.

1980 "Ag Family 'Dream' Stretches from Top of Bighorns to Beartooths." *Basin Republican*, Basin, Wyoming, 24 December 1980.

National Archives

n.d. Land Entry Records, General Land Office (NATF 84). National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Federal Census

1920- *United States Federal Census*. <http://search.ancestrylibrary.com>.  
1930

Historian: Robert G. Rosenberg, Rosenberg Historical Consultants, 739 Crow Creek Road, Cheyenne, WY. 82009.



View to south-southeast of the north (rear) and west walls of Building A, the George Olson homestead cabin.



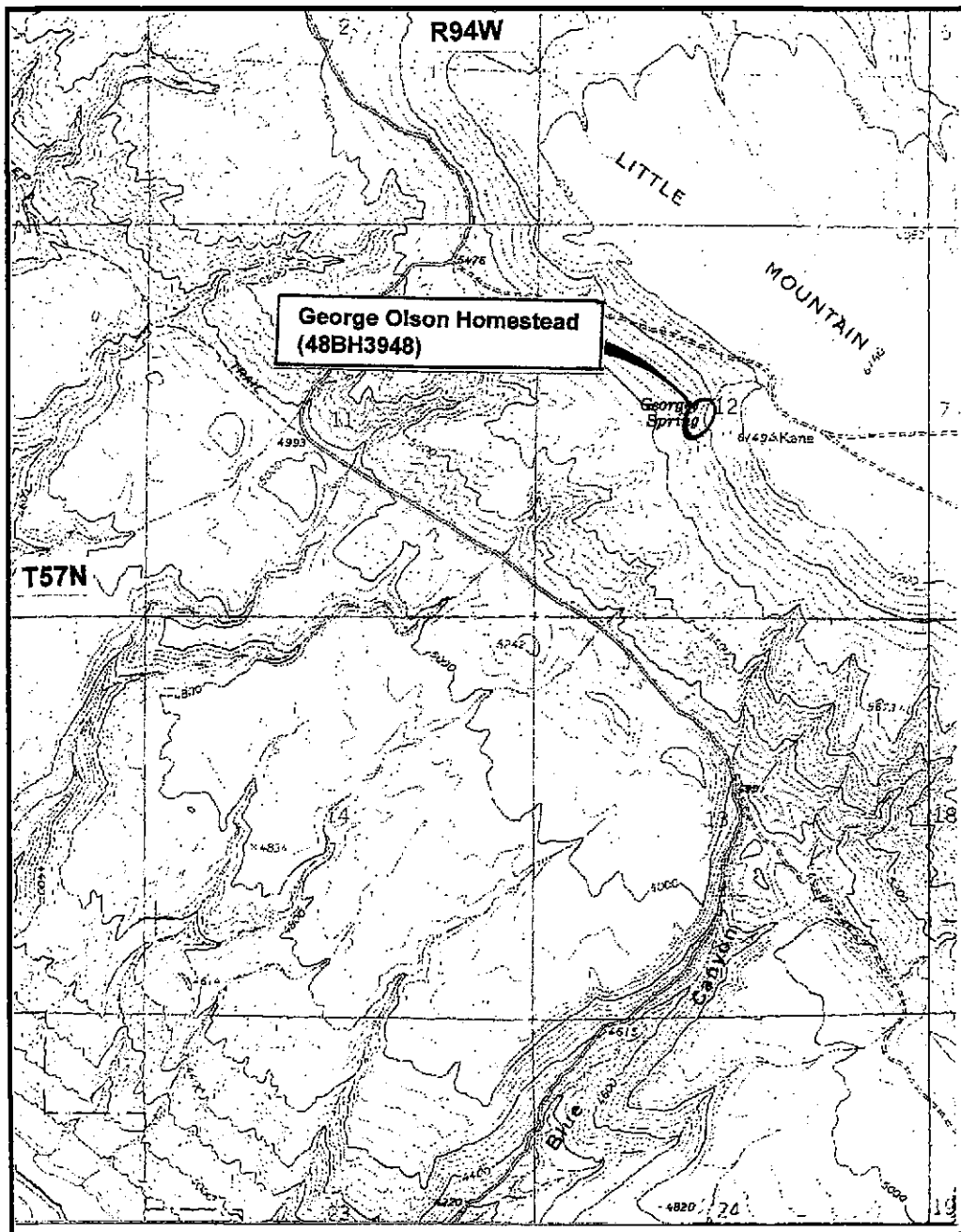
View to northwest of south (front) side and southeast corner notching of Building A, the George Olson homestead cabin.



View to north-northwest of main entrance in the south side of Building A, the George Olson homestead cabin.



View to southeast of the interior of Building A, the George Olson homestead cabin.



Location map: George Olson Homestead. This homestead is located in the NE/SW, SE/NW Section 12, T57N-R94W, on the Natural Trap Cave 7.5' USGS quadrangle.